



Issued weekly. By Subscription, \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

No. 4.

Price, Five Cents.

# PHIL RUSHINGTON'S PLEDGE

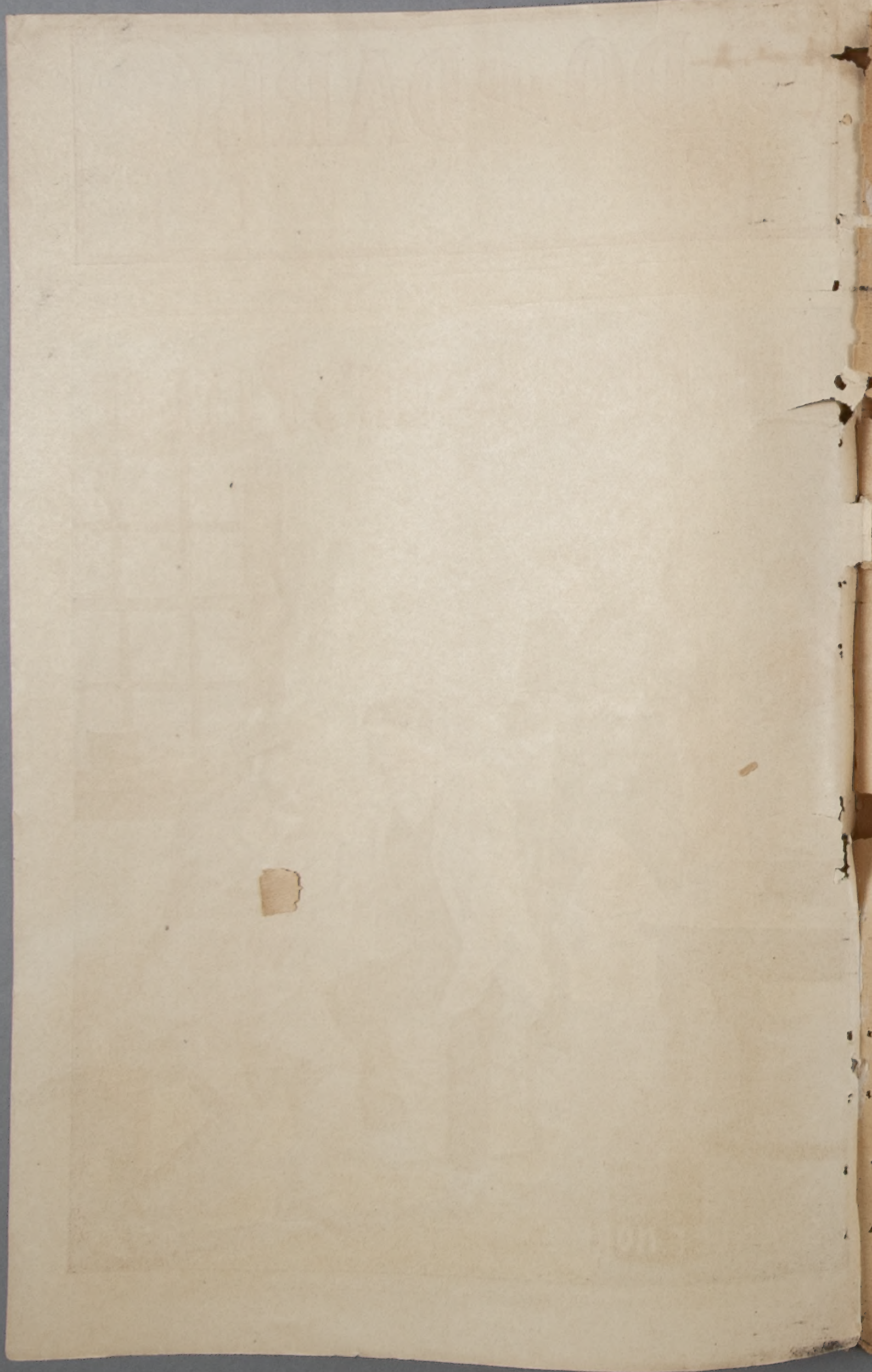
## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DORA WARREN



STANLEY NORRIS

RUSH GLIDED TOWARD THEM WITH SWIFT, SILENT STRIDES.







# DO AND DARE WEEKLY.

*Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$3.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.  
Entered According to Act of Congress, in the year 1900 in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 4.

NEW YORK, March 10, 1900.

Price Five Cents.

## Phil Rushington's Pledge;

OR,

## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DORA.

By STANLEY NORRIS.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SEARCH FOR A SPIDER.

"To-morrow begins the fall term at Springvale Academy, and in spite of all the obstacles that seemed bound to keep you from being on hand, Rush, luck has turned at the last moment, and you will bob up all serene with the rest of us."

"So-so, Walt, if I only do. But there's many a slip, you know, and I have a feeling that I shall miss the term after all. Somehow, I've felt so full of pranks lately that I know something is going to happen to take me down a peg!"

"Take a liver pill, Rush; that is the advice you always give me when I have a fit of the blue-devils," laughed Walt Arkwright.

"That is all right with a fellow who is gone on every girl he sees, and who keeps four kinds of cool poison, pistols of twenty-two, thirty-two and forty-four caliber, scraps of

hemp and tarred rope, two razors and a toad-sticker in the top tray of his trunk wherever he goes, and who has fits of sitting in the twilight and glaring at all of those instruments of death trying to decide which to use for self-murder. Why, old man, your liver must be just sloshing the bile all through your system, and you should eat pills by the plateful, as a man eats baked beans."

"Do let up, Rush—you make me tired!"

"That's another trouble you have too much of—that tired feeling. It is because you are sentimental, like Lord Byron, Tom Moore and a raft of those fellows. Still, you are all right on other subjects. Let me see, how old are you?"

"Eighteen, as you ought to know."

"Well, you should get married and finish up in school afterward. Quit spooning and get some spoons for housekeeping. Swear off drinking tea, eating frosted cake and tapioca cream, and go to swilling rum and smok-



ing a T D, and eat cabbage, tripe and onions. You know, Walt, that I am a temperance man on principle; but I am recommending the rum in place of ordinary civilized drinks as a mere matter of treatment for the kind of suchness that you are sick with."

Walt had risen from the lounge where he had been indolently reclining and glared at his chum for an instant with an expression that approached savageness—as close to that, anyway, as his mild, dreamy countenance could approach.

"That's rather rough, Phil, if you really mean it," he exclaimed.

"Of course I mean it, old man—but in sorrow rather than contempt. All I'm driving at is, that you are kicking through the years of your life when there are no real troubles, and when you should get a cart-load of fun every day in the week, and yet you are unhappy half of the time. You get downright miserable, and I know it, if some girl that smiles at you one day fails to smile just as wide the next time you see her."

"Confound girls, anyway," growled Walt.

"No; they confound you."

"But why do they want to be so fickle? Why can't they mean what they say, the same as a man does? What do they want to keep a fellow on the anxious seat for?"

"Because nine fellows out of ten like a girl best for the rattling old chase she gives him. See here; where is the fun of fishing? Would you get any sport out of catching trout out of your mother's pail, like Simple Simon, being sure of them at every scoop? I rather guess nit. Now, I like girls myself——"

"And they all flock around you like bees after honey!" snapped Walt.

"When I appear indifferent they do. But let me show that I am getting stuck on one of them and I get left all right."

"Not by Dora Warren."

"Dora and I are straight-out practical together. But it isn't a month since she made me feel as if I had given her mortal offense, and I came close to getting lackadaisical over it. But I gave myself a little lecture, and then pitched in and flirted with two other girls to beat the band. The next time I saw Dora she was just the same as ever, though she didn't run after me any."

"What was the matter with her?"

"Don't know—freak, probably. I never asked and never shall. Would rather she should think that I didn't notice it. Another thing, Walt, the better the girl, the more freaky she is, as a rule. I'm old and wise, and I can preach like a parson, and practice like—well, like any average fellow of my measure, and no better!"

Rush ended with a laugh, and going around back of his friend, made a grab at his neck, exclaiming:

"There's a two-by-four spider just crawled down inside of your collar! I tried to poke him out——"

Walt yelled as if his throat were cut, tore off collar and tie, ripped open his shirt, went through all the contortions of an acrobat, finally rolling on the floor and clawing insanely at his spine, while his countenance looked like that of a madman.

"Get at him, Rush, for Heaven's sake!" he howled.

Phil pounced on to his friend in pretended solicitude, whacked him across the back so as to nearly knock the breath out of his body, yanked at his suspenders until the buttons flew like hail, and so doing as much mischief as possible to Walt's usually immaculate attire.

"It must have been one of those big fellows that come on bananas—you just fetched in the bunch you bought of the fruit peddler, you know," Rush was meditatively saying while he helped his friend to annihilate the



remaining clothes which covered him above the belt.

"A tarantula, of course! And it has bitten me! Wow—wow—I'm a goner, Rush!"

Phil, in pretending to hunt for the spider, had thrust a pin into Walt's back, and it was that which had given him the idea that he had been terribly nipped by the insect.

"You should pour down a big swig of liquor of some kind, quick, to brace the system against the poison, same as for rattlesnake and scorpion bites!" advised Rush.

"I haven't a spoonful of liquor to my name! I'll die before you could get to a drug store. Oh, what shall I take? Isn't something else just as good?"

Phil gave him another prick with the pin and then plunged into a closet, where there was a shelf full of bottles, leaving Walt writhing on the floor with his shirt and undervest hanging in shreds. Phil seized two of the bottles, one of them containing Jamaica ginger extract, the other a gill of sweet oil and oil of peppermint. He dashed the contents of the first into a tumbler, filled it up with water, and put it into Walt's trembling hand.

"Down with it—don't stop to draw a breath!" he ordered.

It was like liquid fire, but Walt gulped it down, though it set him to coughing almost to the point of strangulation, while a flood of tears poured from his eyes.

"I'll pour this on to the bites, to soothe 'em in case you should retain consciousness," murmured Rush. And he let the oil mixture flow smoothly down from head and back, to settle in the trousers in a pool, for Walt had risen to a sitting posture to drink the fiery portion.

"The—the spider!" he gasped.

"There—there it is!" said Phil.

The windows were open and Walt saw something black and as large as the bowl of a teaspoon flit along the floor and whisk up

against the dressing-case. Then the thing swirled in mid-air and made for Walt's face. The fellow yelled, and flung the tumbler.

Crash! went the tumbler through the mirror, showering both kinds of glass in all directions. Still the black thing sailed up against Walt's nose, whereat he snorted wildly and clawed at it with his fingers, to which it clung, while he danced to his feet and strove to flip it into the air.

In that he succeeded, and the thing fell on the carpet and lay fluttering at his feet.

By this time the blur cleared somewhat from Walt's eyes, and he obtained a good sight at the object of all his terror. He gazed—he bent closer and glared—he poked at it with the toe of his slippered foot—he boldly seized it betwixt thumb and forefinger!

"A—a black feather!" he howled. And he thrust it up against Phil's nose.

"Well, well, so it is!" exclaimed Rush.

"And you knew it, when you called it a spider! You put the thing down my neck yourself! You know you did it, Rush, and I—I've a mind never to forgive you!"

With that Walt sat down on a stuffed chair, unmindful of the oil which was drizzling copiously down the legs of his trousers on to the carpet.

By this time Rush was laughing, for the whole spectacle of Walt battling with a small black feather, with the havoc which he had wrought, was as comical as anything he had seen for a long time.

Phil seized his chum by the arm and hauled him up in front of the broken mirror.

"See yourself as others see you, and see if you can keep a straight face on!" exclaimed Rushington.

Walt appreciated the ridiculous as thoroughly as did any fellow in the world, and it was a specimen of the ridiculous that he beheld in the shattered glass. Not only that, but in imagination he saw himself tearing



around to rid himself of the supposed deadly insect, while he was giving the room and his own apparel the most chaotic appearance possible. The thought of it all was too much, and in the contemplation of the comic he forgot that he was the victim, and flung himself down and roared with mirth.

"But I'll be even with you for the racket, Rush, see if I'm not," he cried.

"That's all right, Walt, if your wits only get stirred up. It will be good for you to cudgel them some for a trick, too, for you'll feel like killing somebody else instead of making way with yourself. That is a healthier sentiment, anyhow. Now, suppose we get out of here and leave the work-girl to clean up. It looks like the abiding-place of a pig."

"I reckon I need some of the cleaning up, and the bath-tub is the place for me to begin with," laughed Walt.

He was slow in making his toilet usually, but now he worked rather faster than usual, and soon looked as natty as ever. He did not attempt to straighten up the room; and if an explanation was asked for, he was prepared with one which would be plausible, true, and yet not giving away the whole truth.

"I'm going up to see Dora, and I will take you along, Walt, as a chaperon," said Rush, and they went downstairs.

While they were in the hall the bell rang with a furious clangor, and Phil said:

"There is a call that will cheat me out of the term at Springvale Academy—see if it isn't!"

Walt opened the door, and a messenger handed in a letter, saying:

"For Mr. Phil Rushington, imperative. Wait for answer."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DORA.

It was a singular fact that Phil Rushington frequently had impressions or "intuitions"

which predicted coming events, and sometimes telling him exact truths about trifling matters. Whence such impressions came he could not have explained, and he was not in the least superstitious about the peculiarity.

Others have had a similar "second sight," and while in honest persons who do not try to make money by the use of the faculty it is admitted to be unreliable, it is nevertheless correct with sufficient frequency to make one rather uncomfortable when an unpleasant happening is prophesied.

Rush made little of it. Yet on several occasions he had been forewarned of disaster, or impressed by an approaching pleasure. Seldom had he been fooled by the involuntary clairvoyance, as he jokingly called it.

He was not actually surprised, therefore, when the message was handed in to him, with the ominous words: "Imperative. Wait for an answer."

He tore open the message, and at a glance his eyes took in the following:

"DEAR FRIEND PHILIP:—Why do you not come back with Dora? She went out at four o'clock yesterday afternoon, leaving a note saying that she was to meet you and other young friends for a boat ride on the river, and would return early. We have not seen or heard from her since. Just got word from Ida Fairfield that she has not seen her. We knew that she frequently went there to spend a night; but she never would stay anywhere else in this way without trying to let us know, I am sure. Perhaps you forgot to send us a message written by her. Do relieve our anxiety, even if it does seem silly to you.

"Your friend,

"MRS. HELEN WARREN."

Phil read these lines to himself first, and then aloud to Walt.

"What in the name of smoke does it mean?" he cried, as he crumpled the missive.

"That is what I should like to know. Did you expect to go out with her for a boat ride yesterday?" Walt demanded.



"Certainly not."

"Then why should she leave such a message for her folks?"

"It is too much for me."

Phil faced the messenger boy, who was a bright looking young fellow, and demanded:

"Who gave you this letter?"

"Mrs. Horatio Warren, the wife of the lawyer what lives in the fine house on the bluffs."

"She put it into your hands herself, did she?"

"Why, sure. And she didn't even have no gloves on, and there was nothin' the matter with my eyes so but I could be sure what I was lookin' at. Any further evidence ye want, Phil Rushington? Shall I fetch a jestice of the peace to take my oath afore?"

"That's all right, Johnny, only I wanted to be sure on every point. She told you to wait for an answer?"

"I wouldn't stand here chuckin' bluffs with a kid like you if she didn't."

"You need stand here no longer, for I will go in person to answer the message. Will that do as well?"

"Not quite, me covey," said the lad.

Rush was not slow to comprehend what was wanted, and without a word he took a silver quarter from his pocket and deftly slipped it down the lad's neck, as he had done with the feather in the case of Walt.

"Be hunting for that piece of tin, my son, while I go and reply to the message," he said.

Rush and Walt started off together mounting their wheels at the door, leaving the messenger boy wriggling and groping for the money, and muttering remarks which were not as grateful to Phil as they should have been.

"I'm going along with you, Rush, whether you invite me or not," said Walt, as they sped away along the hard, white road.

"I supposed that was understood to be given without the formality of words, old man. But this business troubles me more than a little, for the Warrêns think that I, in some way, am responsible for the disappearance of Dora. It is mighty queer all around, for she never plays that kind of practical joke, and if it is not a joke, then it follows that it is something serious."

"It is a mistake—an accident—something of that kind," said Walt, floundering helplessly in the attempt to give an explanation.

"Of course it is something," laughed Phil, while in truth there was a strange sinking at his heart at the thought that the bright and beautiful girl who was such a warm friend to him might be in real danger.

The run to the residence of the Warrens did not take more than eight minutes, for they did not stop to see the dust settle behind their wheels. Mrs. Warren was at the door as they rode up, for she was on the lookout for the return of the messenger.

She saw the grave and puzzled expression on the faces of the two youths even before they were near enough to speak, and she ran out to meet them.

"I'm so glad you came, Philip!" she cried. "And now I am sure you will clear up my foolish fears—only, I wish you would not look so serious about it, for it is something that I cannot bear to have a joke made about."

"There is no joking, Mrs. Warren, when I say that I am as much puzzled about this affair as you are," said Phil, as he took both of the lady's hands in his own, as a son might have done.

She looked searchingly into his face, for she well knew how dearly he loved to play pranks, though she had never known him to be unkind in them. But she saw only serious concern in his handsome eyes.



"Then you cannot tell me where my Dora is?" she asked.

"I have not seen her since I was here the day before yesterday."

"But she was with you yesterday, in a boat ride on the river—you would not deny that!"

"I did not see Dora Warren at all yesterday, as Walt here can testify, for we were together almost constantly."

"But she left a note for me saying that she went to meet you. What is the meaning of that?"

"There was no appointment made for a boat ride for yesterday, as she knows—unless she was tricked by somebody."

"Here is her note to me," said Mrs. Warren, handing Rush a small crumpled sheet.

The note was in the handwriting which was so familiar to Rush, and worded as follows:

*"Dearest Mamma:*—There is to be a boat ride on the river this afternoon and I am going—with Phil Rushington, of course. Walt will probably go, and Ida, and the rest of the dizzy crew that I train with.

"With boats and boys we sail the stream,  
And tune our lutes or toot our flutes,  
Or lick our lips for frozen cream!

"Lovingly thine,

"DORA (the Norm. Poet.)"

Despite the anxiety of the moment Phil could not help smiling over the rhymes, into which Dora Warren always dropped, as a duck will drop into water. Dora was a student in the Normal School, which was located on one side of the beautiful Lake Adineo, and opposite to the Springvale Academy. She was forever making rhymes about her friends and things in general, and into them she wove many a subtle fancy with sparkles from her sunny wit.

Rush liked her because she was always a match for him in repartee, and while he always could tell when he made a "mash" with a new girl acquaintance, he was never quite

sure that Dora was "gone" on him sufficiently so that he might be confident that no one else might supplant him in her affections.

They were fast friends in any case, and the thought that any danger might have assailed her was enough to awaken his alertest senses.

"She wrote this letter, sure enough," he declared.

"Oh, there can be no doubt of that."

"Let me see it, please," said Walt, who had known Dora Warren many years before Phil had ever met her.

The letter was handed to him, and when he had read it, he said:

"That is the first time I ever knew her to quote her own verses a second time. She always said that if she could not make fresh rhymes for new occasions she would make none."

"Aren't those new ones?" Phil demanded.

"No; they were first used in a note written to me long before you ever saw her, and when she liked me as well as she does you now."

Phil looked keenly into his friend's eyes.

"Are you sure, Walt, that these are the same? As you say, she never uses over any of her old poetry, as she has told me."

"I guess I'm not likely to forget them, for I have the note and the verse among my treasures at home, and it isn't a week since I read it over, when I had a blue fit on me."

Mrs. Warren evinced fresh alarm, and her feeling was but a reflection of the look upon the faces of the two youths.

"There is surely something wrong about the note, then," she cried. "For I would not dare to say that the handwriting was Dora's. She has taken to the new-fangled vertical style of penmanship, and in that everybody's writing looks a great deal alike."

"That is so," muttered Phil. Meanwhile, Walt was scrutinizing the letter with a critical eye.



"This may be hers," he said, holding it up to the light. "But I don't believe it, just the same."

Rush had the instincts of a detective, when they were once aroused, although it was likely that he would not act so keenly excepting in a case which held for him a vital and personal interest.

"Please let me look at the letter once more," he said.

Walt gave it to him, though his fingers seemed to cling to it as if he were reluctant to let it go.

Phil felt of the paper, testing its texture and weight.

"There is no initial or monogram on the sheet," he observed.

"Dora uses paper without a mark of that kind," said Mrs. Warren.

"Have you any writing paper such as she uses at present?" Phil asked.

"Yes, plenty of it. I will show you some if you will come into the house."

In the pleasant drawing-room of the Warrens the boys were for a short time left alone, and then Rush said:

"Dora would never play a practical joke that would alarm her parents. Besides, her father is away at present, and she knows that her mother would be the more nervous on that account. Therefore, she is either the victim of a playful or a malicious trick. I'm afraid——"

Mrs. Warren came in at the moment with a blank sheet of writing paper. Phil examined it, in comparison with that on which the note was written.

"It is different in quality and make, as the calendared stamp shows on holding it up to the light," was Phil's verdict.

"And what do you conclude from that?" was the anxious query.

"That she did not write the note, and that,

therefore, the matter had better be placed in the hands of the police at once!"

Mrs. Warren would have fallen to the floor in a swoon had Rushington not caught her in his strong arms.

### CHAPTER III.

#### RUSH PUTS OUT HIS MUSCLE.

Phil Rushington and Walt Arkwright remained at the Warren dwelling only long enough to assure themselves that the prostration of the lady was only temporary, and that she would rally so as to do what was necessary to aid the officers in tracing the missing girl.

At the police station they gave all the points in the case of which they were in possession. At the same time Rush was using his own wits rather more sharply than had ever been the case before.

"It is a mischievous trick, else it is a case of actual abduction," said the officer in charge at the station.

"Then there must be a motive behind the act," Phil returned.

"There is always a motive for every human action, young man. We police officers know that, and that there are only a few different motives that have play in the cases that come under our notice. Malice is one, and a frequent one; love and jealousy come in pretty often, and the want of money is the nimblest motive of all. Now, of what you know of Miss Warren and her family, which do you think is at the bottom of this affair?"

"Malice, but not toward Miss Warren personally, so much as it is against someone else," said Phil Rushington, promptly.

"Against her father, then?"

"No, I believe that I am the object of it. Still, the reason for my thinking so will seem a slim one to you, I'm afraid."

"Explain yourself, please."



Phil complied, while Walt stared in dumb wonderment. His explanation involved the telling of an incident which occurred in that vicinity about two weeks before. While out wheeling with Dora Warren, on a bicycle path which led through a strip of woods, they had come upon a young man who was repairing his bicycle and obstructing the way in doing so. Phil had politely asked him to let them pass, but the young man took no notice of the request. After patient waiting, Phil had ordered the fellow to get out of the way, and the affair ended in Rush giving the young man—whose name was Arthur Wardner—a sound thrashing, and throwing him and his wheel out of the path.

Wardner was wealthy, owning a steam yacht and everything else to which he might take a fancy. He had a pretty young lady with him, who left him in the lurch after Phil had given him the drubbing, accompanying Rushington and Dora to the home of Walt Arkwright. This probably added to the chagrin of Wardner. Walt warned Phil that he had made a dangerous enemy.

Phil was attacked while alone on the same path, after dark, by three ruffians, but he made such a plucky fight that they got the worst of it, while Walt and a stranger came along in time to prevent them from turning the tables. Since then he had obtained no positive evidence against Wardner, and it was reported that the latter had gone to a distant part of the country.

Wardner was known to have a vindictive temper, and that he would in the end try to get even with Phil for the humiliation inflicted, Walt, at least, steadily believed.

But they supposed that anything done would be in the form of a direct attack, rather than an attempt to hurt through a friend. Yet Rush had thought of Wardner the moment that it seemed to be certain that there

had been foul play in the disappearance of Dora.

This was the tale which Phil told to the police captain. The latter smiled when Rush had finished.

"And you think the young lady has been abducted by somebody on Wardner's account, to get even with you?" he said.

"I feel pretty sure of it."

"Well, you would make a pretty poor police officer if you let such ideas as that have weight with you. Why, you are only a mere boy, and if anybody wanted to even up a score with you they would hire an able-bodied man to thrash the stuffing out of you."

Phil might have felt a touch of anger had he not known that the officer knew little of his abilities in the line of taking care of himself. As it was, Rush winked at Walt as he answered:

"Oh, that is all right, only I might run so fast that the able-bodied man couldn't catch me."

"Didn't my friend just tell you that three men pitched onto him the other night, and that the whole crowd failed to get away with him?" exclaimed Walt, indignant on Phil's account at the good-natured contempt displayed by the police officer.

"That is all right," laughed the captain. "But you know I used to be a boy myself, and I thought I was quite a fighter. It is no harm to brag a little; it is the only way to tell strangers that we think ourselves to be all right. About this abduction business, let me say that I think the young lady has gone off on a lark of some sort, and got detained in some way. Of course, we'll look after her, and fetch her home safe and tearful in a few hours. Lots of such cases, my boys—hosts of them!"

For a moment it was all Phil could do to keep his hands off the complacent officer. But of course it would have been absurd for



him to have shown that he cared for what the other had said. In truth, the chance to show the man that he was not so easily thrashed by an "able-bodied man" as he supposed was nearer than either suspected.

"We'll leave the case to you, sir, since it is such a simple one," laughed Phil. And he followed Walt out of the station-house.

"I hope it will turn out to be as easy as that captain thinks," said Walt, as they reached the street.

"I'm not going to leave it all to him, just the same," was the retort of Rush.

"What will you do?"

"Proceed according to my own theory of the case and try and save Dora Warren from a greater danger. I know that this business was started for revenge on me principally, although Wardner knows that the young lady who was with him, and who has not spoken to him from that day to this, is now a warm friend of Dora's, and he has reason to think that the coolness of Miss Darrell is due to Dora's influence, as well as to the event of that day. The truth is, Dora has informed Miss Darrell's mother of the real character of Wardner, and that has counted against him more than anything else. So he can get revenge on Dora and me at the same time."

The boys were speaking in a low tone as they walked briskly out to the street corner where they could take a suburban car to the home of Walt. As they turned the corner they both glanced back and saw a man dodge from view just beyond the corner dwelling as if he had been dogging their footsteps and wished to avoid observation.

"See him?" whispered Walt.

"Yes, and I'm going to feel him!" said Rush.

Phil shot past the corner of the building as if he were making a thirty-yard dash, and while Walt followed at a good pace, he found

his friend already gripping the collar of the one who had been spying on them when he got in sight of them.

The man was a big, burly fellow, and he was striving with all his strength to throw off the hand of his assailant.

They were only a short distance from the police station, and Walt saw the captain with whom they had just been talking, standing in the doorway and staring in evident astonishment at Rush and the man he was struggling with.

The ruffian squirmed and kicked, but he kept his mouth shut, which showed that he was not anxious to call the police to his assistance.

He would soon have succeeded in getting clear of Phil's grasp, but before he could do so, Rush hit him a hard thump back of the ear with his left hand, exclaiming as he did so:

"Down with you—you've got to cave and tell why you were following me like a sneak-thief. Down with you, I say!"

Whack! sounded Phil's hand on the man's head again. It was a staggerer, and the ruffian's knees trembled, while he fought with less vim.

There was no officer in sight except the police captain in the doorway of the station-house, and he forgot his dignity so far as to approach the combatants on a run. When he was quite close to them, however, he paused and saw Phil hit the man a final clip that sent him down on his knees before he offered to interiere. Then he laid a hand on the shoulder of each, exclaiming:

"Hold up, now, and tell me what this scrapping means!"

Rush coolly got the head of the ruffian under his arm in a convenient position for punching it, and held it there as he answered:

"This man was spying on me when I went



in to see you, captain, and then he started out to follow me, step by step. I was going to make sure of him and then fetch him in to see you. Here he is—I make you a present of him, the only condition being that you make his tongue wag in the cause of truth.”

Walt was staring and the police captain grinned, while the ruffian twisted his head from side to side and glared.

“It was irregular, young fellow, as you weren’t sworn in as a special officer, but you did the trick so neat that I’ll have to accept of the present. Your companion here is ready to swear to the truth of what you have stated, I suppose?”

“Sure,” said Walt. At the same time the officer snapped some bracelets on to the wrists of the ruffian, saying:

“You’ll have to come over and be entertained by the city, my man. I saw you sneaking after these young gentlemen myself, so you needn’t waste any breath denying it.”

The man looked sullen and defiant, and made no protestations of innocence. But he bent upon Rushington a look of the most malignant hatred.

“How about making the man talk if I go with you over to the station?” Phil demanded.

“We can try, but we can’t compel him to say anything out of court, you know.”

“If you had left him to me I would have made him most happy to open his lips and tell me everything I wanted to know,” Rush declared.

“I don’t know but you are right, for you had the fellow foul when I took a hand in the game. It was a pity that I had to interfere. If I could only have kept my eyes off until you had finished him up, all would have been well. But we will try to make him talk.”

For the first time the ruffian spoke, and

there was an exultant and crafty gleam in his eyes as he said:

“Ye can’t make me criminate myself either in court or out of it, and I’m much obleeged to the cop for takin’ me under his wing so that the young feller had to quit punchin’ me. That gives me another show, and the youngster will see me agin, when he ain’t so ready, mayhap!”

#### CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH TWO HEADS ARE TURNED BY THE SIGHT OF A PRETTY FACE.

The ruffian was taken into the police station and his name booked as Theron Rogers. He said that he hailed from the city of Boston, and this was all the information that could be gotten out of him.

“He spoke the truth when he said that he could not be made to criminate himself in court or out of it,” the police captain declared to Phil and Walt after he had obtained all the points that the man would give.

“Which shows that the police and even the courts are sometimes of less value than pure nerve and a good pair of fists. I could have made the man tell the whole truth if you hadn’t interfered. Now I wish you would set him free and let me keep an eye open for him.”

Walt had never seen Phil show more excitement. The truth was, the disappearance of Dora Warren disturbed and alarmed Phil far more than he admitted.

“I really believe you could whack the truth out of him,” exclaimed the officer. “I never saw a lad of your age and weight who could seem to handle an able-bodied man with such ease. I guess I underrated you when I first spoke to you to-day.”

The truth was, that Phil Rushington had arms with muscles developed in a most abnormal manner, which rendered him more



than a match for any ordinary man in point of physical prowess. He had likewise practiced "the manly art," and there were not many who could stand up before him when he did his best.

Of these things he made no boast.

He had come to be somewhat indifferent to comments, and at the same time to value more highly the wonderful gift of strength which rendered him able to cope with almost any foe.

They did not tarry long to discuss the matter with the police officer, who was too conceited to admit that they were ever right unless they agreed with him, or that boys of their experience had a right to have any opinions anyway.

The police captain promised that all that was possible would be done to induce the prisoner to tell if he had anything to do with the disappearance of the young lady. If he could not be made to talk he would be fined and set free, in the belief that he would then do something more which would lead to his own betrayal.

"That is all I ask for," said Phil, when he and Walt were again on the street together. "Let that man get in my way again and see if I don't make him talk!"

"He'll be careful not to give you another such chance at him, now that he knows the stuff your arms are made of."

"He will fight shy, of course, but if he does anything to annoy me he will have to take some risks, and then I shall have him on the hip."

"That's right."

In a short time they were back again at the residence of the Warrens. Mr. Warren had not yet returned, and it was doubtful if he could get home that day.

Mrs. Warren was given as much encouraging assurance as the condition of the case would possibly warrant.

"I make you this pledge, Mrs. Warren," said Phil. "I will sleep little and eat less until Dora is found and restored to you in safety. I feel that I, in a measure, am responsible for her danger, and I will not rest until she is safe."

"I cannot see how you are in any way to blame for what has happened, Philip."

"I did not say that I was to blame. One may be responsible without being to blame. My name was used by the unknown enemy who wrote the note to you, and I believe that it is all done in part to obtain revenge on me. But don't worry; you know they call me Rush, and it is with a rush that I put things through when I start out on them. You will see Dora back again in forty-eight hours or less, and she will make some new poetry for us all to laugh over."

Mrs. Warren fairly hugged Phil in her gratitude for his cheerful speech, for it gave her new hope. Indeed, she felt more confidence in the resourceful young fellow, who had never yet been thrown down in any undertaking, than she did in the whole police force of the city.

Walt was as eager to take a hand in the affair as Phil was, and Rush was glad enough to accept his help. For an hour or more they searched everywhere, plying with questions each person they encountered, whether man, woman or child, in quest of a clew.

Such work could not long be pursued in vain.

On the beautiful drive that led along the river side they found a laborer who was mending the road, and who had seen a man and a young girl enter a row-boat and cross the stream to the wooded bank on the opposite side, at about the hour when Dora was supposed to have been abducted.

The laborer had observed them with some curiosity, as the girl seemed to him to enter the boat with reluctance, and the man had



finally to lift her into it. Still, there had been no appearance of a struggle, and the laborer was not really suspicious—he was merely curious.

"A clew!—a clew!" cried Rush.

He and Walt fairly ran down to the boat-house by the river. It was a private one, and there were two boats swinging in the current at the short pier.

"They are locked, and how are we going to get permission to use one of them?" Walt asked.

"In a case of this kind I don't believe we would be warranted in waiting for permission when we can smash a padlock with a stone and pay for it and the boat besides afterward."

"True enough, Rush—and here goes for the lock."

Walt did the smashing, the lock gave way, the chain was released, the oars fell into place, and the boat shot out upon the majestic river.

The laborer had noted very accurately where the boat had made a landing on the other side, and the boys made for that point, reaching it in a few minutes.

The other shore of the river was wooded densely, and only a footpath led up from the spot where they landed. They secured the boat as well as they could and fairly ran up the steep path and through the woods.

They soon came out on a narrow public road which seemed to have been but little traveled. Here they did not know which way to turn, but they chose the direction which would lead them away from the more thickly settled section.

That side of the river was in a state of nature, being covered with a growth of old forest trees down to the very brink of the stream. The boys knew that they would not have to go far to reach a locality which

was as much a wilderness as could be found in the entire State.

This argued that Dora Warren had indeed been abducted, and taken by her captor to this wild locality, where the police methods of the city would be absolutely of no avail.

"We ought to have horses, or our bikes," said Walt.

"Horses, perhaps, but the bikes we would have to leave, on account of the bad road, or being obliged to take to the woods. No, we are looking for clews now; when we are sure we are on the right track, then we will find a way to get there with all speed."

It was blind business to follow along a strange and lonely road without knowing that they were getting any nearer to the one they were seeking. Yet Rush felt that he was on the right track, and that something would soon be found to confirm his belief.

He was presently justified in his course. They came to what seemed to be a farmhouse, of a somewhat poverty-stricken sort. The buildings needed shingling and had a tumble-down aspect. There were old wagons and dilapidated farming implements in the yard.

"Just the sort of place I want to buy for a summer residence, Walt," said Rush, with mock gravity. "Then I'll advertise for genteel summer boarders. I could fix them out with any kind of a vehicle, from a buckboard to a sleigh with a broken dasher for a July ride. The nearest approach to a steed that I yet observe is the sawhorse yonder, and that seems to be spavined and chest-foundered. But a man can't have everything, even at a summer resort. Here goes for finding out the sort of gentry who live here."

"I hope they saw the chap with Dora," said Walt, who was not so good as Phil at disguising a serious mood.

"Probably an old chap will come to the



door and drawl and stare and ask questions till we will have to get our fingers on his thrapple to make him realize that it is a hurry business that we are out on."

Rush knocked on the dingy door, and they soon had the satisfaction of hearing a voice and footsteps within. But they were wholly unprepared for the vision which was to greet them when the door was at last thrown open.

Walt fairly caught his breath, and even Rush was smitten dumb for an instant. The one who opened the door was a girl, seemingly about sixteen, and so sweet and dainty in appearance that the boys were sure that her equal could not exist anywhere in the world.

"Ah-m-m-m!" came in an incoherent mumble from the lips of Walt. Phil did a trifle better, for he managed to bow and say:

"Good morning!" although it was well along in the afternoon.

"Good afternoon, young gentlemen!" returned the girl, with the sweetest smile—in the estimation of Walt—that was ever smiled.

Rush collected his wits long before Walt was sure that he had any, and managed to speak with a tolerable degree of self-possession.

"We were looking for some one who must have passed here yesterday—a man with a dark beard, and a young lady. Have you seen them?"

"Oh, yes; they stopped here on their way, I believe? Will you come in? Perhaps papa can tell you more about it," said the young lady, with an enchanting show of her white teeth. At the same time she looked at Phil with a shy appearance of admiration.

Hardly knowing whether he was afoot or on horseback, Rush led the way into the tumble-down house, followed by Walt.

## CHAPTER V.

### TRAPPED WITH A PRETTY JAILOR.

If the house looked dingy on the outside, it was yet more so within. The boys were ushered into a large, low room which was not even plastered overhead or on the sides, while the bare timbers were black with smoke and dust.

In a miserable chair a man was sitting, a crutch by his side, and his head resting back as if he were either ill or feeble with age.

His hair and beard were so dark that he could not have been very old, however, and his eyes, as they fell upon his visitors, were keen enough.

The girl placed chairs for the boys, and they could see that there was a deep flush on her dainty cheeks, as though she were humiliated by the miserable conditions surrounding her.

"Papa is not well, and I have to do the best I can," she said in a low tone to Rush. She was so simple and modest in spite of her evident distress that Phil pitied her with all his heart.

"It is all right, so make no apologies," said Phil.

At this she smiled upon him so sweetly that he came near to forgetting that he was out on a quest for Dora Warren, for whom he entertained a more than friendly regard.

The man in the chair stared at the boys as if he was trying to decide whether they meant to murder, or merely to rob him of his valuables. Then he gruffly demanded:

"Well, what is it that you want, young gentlemen?"

Rush was not so imprudent as to state all the facts of the case, for he did not like the looks of the old man, however enchanting might be the daughter. He merely explained that they were trying to get track



of a man accompanied by a young lady who must have passed that way the day before.

As Phil briefly stated the matter, he saw the eyes of the man dart a swift, malignant glance over at his daughter, who at the moment stood where the boys could not see her face. But it seemed to Rush that the man's glance implied a silent threat, and when he stole a glance at her face a moment later he saw that her cheeks were paler than when he had last looked at her.

"He is ugly as sin, and that sweet girl is afraid of her life!" was the mental comment of Phil.

Walt had observed the same signs, and he reached the same conclusion, while he resolved to give the old man a peeler with his fist if he looked at the girl like that again—certainly if he spoke unkindly to her.

So, although she did not know it, the fair young stranger had found two loyal champions without having even hinted to them that she was in need of them.

"Looking for a man and woman that came this way, eh!" said the man, with a shrug. "Well, what if you found them?"

"I had good reasons for wishing to see them, which I suppose it is not necessary for me to explain, sir."

"I suppose not. Nor is it necessary for me to tell you anything about them, should I know anything."

"That depends, sir. It is important that I should know where they went. The young lady is a friend."

"A friend of yours?"

"That is what I said."

"And was the man a friend, too?"

"I didn't say."

"Which is the same as admitting that he isn't a friend, or that there is trouble of some sort between ye. Always the way with these people who come around asking such innocent sounding questions. They are up

to some sort of tricks every time. No, young gentlemen, I can't tell ye anything about the people ye're inquiring for!"

Rush sprang to his feet, clenching his hands.

"You are insulting and cool enough, I'll say that for you!" he cried.

"Then ye no need to come here and ask questions. We don't keep no free intelligence office."

"Well, I must say that you would have to draw on somebody's stock of intelligence besides your own to run much of an office of that kind! What is the reason that you want to object to answering a simple and easy question, when it is civilly asked?"

"Because it is against my principles to answer questions of any kind without knowing why they are asked. When a man answers a question he gives something without getting anything in return, while the one who asks gets something for nothing."

Rush laughed.

"You figure down on matters a little the finest of anybody that I ever saw yet!" he exclaimed. "But I want you to understand that I haven't taken all of this trouble just to be choked off when I am right onto the information I am after. Your daughter told me but a moment ago that the people I am seeking stopped here——"

"Vera," snapped the old man, turning fiercely upon the girl. "Did you tell them that?"

"I—I did not know, papa, that you would care!" pleaded the girl.

The man thumped his crutch loudly on the floor, and almost at the same instant there was the sound of footsteps outside, and then some one tried to open and next shook and pounded upon the door by which Walt and Phil had entered.

Rush was all ready for a stand-up fight with any kind of a crowd that might show



up against him. But he again glanced at the face of the girl, whom the man had called Vera, and he saw her make a furtive sign which he readily understood.

It was a silent request for him to pass out of the room by way of a door which was nearly opposite that by which they had entered the house.

Had this request come from anybody in the world but a pretty girl Phil Rushington would not have heeded it. But he had a feeling, somehow, that Vera was fearful of consequences to herself if they remained in the room, and that she at the same time intended to secretly aid him in his quest, and, therefore, that it was for the interest of all concerned for him to obey the mute request.

There was not much time in which to debate the matter, and with a wave of his hand to Walt he crossed the room and opened the door, which he had an idea led to the open air through a small shed.

As Rush darted through the doorway the door swung to after him, and he was sure that he heard the click of a bolt in the lock. He thought Walt was at his heels. He turned, and to his surprise found that the door was indeed shut, but that his companion was not in sight.

Phil seized the latch and pulled with all his strength at the door—but in vain! He shook it, he kicked at it, he shouted at the top of his voice—likewise in vain.

The door was built of two heavy planks, without panels or weak spots of any kind. It was as sound as the walls of the house itself. Nor was this all that Phil observed as he glanced swiftly around the room. There was only one small window, high up against the ceiling, and no door beside the one by which he had entered.

"Trapped!" he exclaimed.

For a minute he kept still and listened. The door was so heavy and shut so closely

that he could hear but little from the other room. But he was sure that he heard the sounds of a struggle, and he believed that Walt was making a fight of it on his own account.

He could also hear the sound of gruff voices, and he judged that those whom he had heard clamoring at the entrance had been admitted.

"Walt can't put up a fight against heavy odds, though the boy will do all he can and he'll give somebody a sore head, I'm sure of that. But I must take a hand in this row. I don't propose to stay boxed up here in this fashion."

Phil looked about him for something to use as a battering ram. There was one chair—nothing else.

With that he aimed a fearful blow at the door and smashed—the chair. The door was not damaged in the least.

"It is as good as a prison. I'll have to work slower and with something besides my muscles, that's sure. I've a good knife and I will see what the lock is made of."

He fell to hacking with the stout blade of his knife at the woodwork around the lock. He made such rapid progress that he was confident of soon being able to get at the lock itself and slip back the bolt. But just as he was about to succeed he felt a hand on his arm.

He wheeled with lightning quickness, ready to grapple with the intruder, but his arms dropped at his sides as he found himself looking into the beautiful face of Vera!

"Hush! Be very cautious, and all will be well!" she said, in a low voice.

She accompanied the words by a smile that disarmed Phil of any suspicions which he might at first have felt.

"How in the world did you get in here?" he demanded.



"That is a secret, and you must not be too curious," smiled Vera.

"You'll have to let me be curious a little bit, Miss Vera, even if I seem ungallant. This whole business has been rather rapid, and although I never had the name of being slow, things seem to have gotten ahead of me by several laps. Where is my friend? I heard fighting; is he all right?"

"He is all right, Phil Rushington, and not worrying about you half as much as you are about him."

"You have my whole name, and I want to know how you got hold of that?"

"Curious again! Perhaps your friend told me, and that wouldn't be mysterious. Now please don't ask so many questions just now when I am here to do you a kindness. The truth is, you have run yourself into an awful trap, and if I had not heard something about your bravery and other good qualities before I saw you, I could do nothing to help you. But you are afraid of nothing, it is said, and you have thrashed three or four stout men single-handed in a fight!"

Phil's brain was in a whirl. The girl who looked into his face and smilingly said these things was as simple and sweet as a child, and there was a sort of shyness in her manners which was most charming. Yet there was an air of playfulness at a time when it would seem that she should be in a most serious and distressed state, which was inconsistent with her appearance of innocence.

"Are you going to let me out of this place, Miss Vera?" he asked.

"That depends upon whether or not you are willing to be cautious after you are out. You have the name of being an awful fighter, and I don't wish you to pitch into papa, who is too feeble to defend himself."

Rush stared into the eyes which looked

into his own, and seemed to see laughter dancing in their depths!

## CHAPTER VI.

"TAKE MY WORD FOR IT, PHIL RUSHINGTON, I WILL NOT BETRAY YOU!"

"I believe," said Rush, "that you are deeper than you pretend, and that you were inviting me into what you knew was the parlor of the spider when you asked me so pleasantly to come into the house a little while ago. Now I have the name of being always polite to young ladies——"

"You have the name of being something more among them," Vera interrupted.

"What is that?"

"A masher!"

"Whew! But that is an awful sharp thing to say! Do you accuse me of trying to make a mash in this quarter, and is it for that you are seeking to get even with me?"

"Why do you think I am trying to get even with you?"

"You try to cut me up by saying sharp things, and if I didn't have the hide of a rhinoceros, you would break me up terribly."

"I knew you were not thin-skinned, or I should have been more tender of your feelings. Really, though, I don't wonder so much that the girls all like you, for you have lots of nerve and just cheek enough to make you jolly to talk with. If you only get out of this scrape with your life, I shall be glad that you came here, for I don't see many real nice young fellows. Papa keeps his crutch loaded for all such who may come to see me."

"That is rough on you, Miss Vera. What is the crutch loaded with?"

"Dynamite and rusty nails and such things," laughed Vera.

"Can't you steal the crutch and let me spike it, so that it will be useless as a weapon?"



"I could, but I know you would never get away from here if I did that. At the same time you would surely think that you had made another mash. No, Phil Rushington, I will let papa keep his crutch, for, although it seems hard for me at times, I know that he is wisest. I am young and unused to the ways of the world."

Phil could hardly realize that this was the same girl who had seemed so timid and shrinking when he and Walt had first been admitted to the house. It was not Rushington's way to allow such matters to trouble him deeply, but he could not help but wish that this girl might prove herself to be as sweet and innocent in character as her face seemed to promise.

She was as bright and pretty as Dora Warren, and as was usual with Rush, he liked her the better for not being too ready to confess a special liking for him. Yet he believed that she was really friendly—he could not believe that she had intended to act treacherously toward him.

He was more than a little worried about Walt, from whom no sign had come since he had been left behind in the other room. Then, what had occurred at this house was enough to prove that the inmates had something to do with the abductor of Dora, and it also showed that she was in hands which would not readily give her up, or scruple at any means of carrying out their ends, whatever they might be.

"Really, Miss Vera," said Rush, "while I would like to spend an hour in a pleasant chat with you, I feel that I must be doing something for my friends just now. If you were going to show me an easy way of getting out of this place I must ask you to be about it."

"So you are in a hurry to leave me, after all!" the girl exclaimed, with a pretty pout of her red lips.

"I didn't say that. But a fellow must choose business before pleasure, you know, and it is business that fetches me here. But perhaps you can help me some while we are talking. You said that the man with the young lady for whom I was inquiring stopped here yesterday, and that your father could tell me about them. He didn't do it. Now won't you tell?"

"What do you want to know?"

"First, if the young lady was below medium height, with a round face, and bright eyes, as pretty—almost—as yours?"

"Why didn't you say what you meant?" exclaimed Vera.

"What is that?"

"That her eyes are prettier than mine?"

She looked straight at Phil as she said that, and it seemed to Rush that she was in earnest and almost anxious for his response.

Phil did not mean to be disloyal, but he could not help admitting the truth, with Vera looking at him so eagerly.

"Her eyes are not prettier than yours, Miss Vera. Indeed, you have the advantage in that respect. But she is a very beautiful girl, and her wits are rather sharper than yours."

"Oh, they are! Perhaps you don't know, and you may say different when you know me better, if you ever do."

"This isn't answering my questions, Miss Vera."

"I haven't promised to answer them."

"Won't you do so?"

"I don't know. Really, I don't know what to do about this, Phil Rushington."

The girl knitted her pretty brows, and it was plain that she was truly at a loss what to say or do. She appeared as if duty pulled her in one direction and inclination in another.

"I must know about the man and the young lady with him," said Phil, with a sud-



den show of firmness that caused Vera to look at him keenly.

"Why do you wish to know about them?"

"Because there has been foul play, and the girl is being carried off against her will. I believe that you know that as well as I do, Vera!"

"No, no, you are mistaken. I know nothing about it, except that they came here and papa talked with the man, and then——"

She interrupted herself and became silent.

"Go on," said Rush. "You might as well tell the whole, and then you won't be blamed when the case comes to a trial in the courts, as it is bound to do one of these days."

"Now you are trying to scare me, and I won't let anybody do that."

"You keep putting me off with talk, and that won't do. I want to know what became of the girl after she came here."

"I cannot tell you, Phil Rushington."

"You mean that you don't want to tell."

"Quit your questioning—you are worse than a lawyer. I came in here to help you out of the scrape that you have gotten yourself into, and you have taken advantage of me to try to pump facts out of me that my father would not let me disclose. That isn't fair. Shall I help you out of here or will you stay?"

"If you can get me out any quicker or easier than I can get out alone, I would be glad to have you. But I came here to get information of the young lady who has been abducted, and now that I know she has been here I shall not go away until I have learned something about her."

"Stay here, then, and take the consequences! I think you are just an obstinate chump. There!"

Vera's face was flushed, and it was clear that she was genuinely angry. But she looked prettier than ever, and for a moment Phil hesitated. He was nearer to being ruled

or fooled by a girl at that moment than he had ever been in his life, and had Walt been in his place Vera would have won the day.

But Rush thought of Dora, and of her danger, and of the level head which he had always carried with him, and prudence held him firm.

"I'll try getting out of here on my own hook, Miss Vera, since you had rather not help me," he said. And he turned to complete the task of cutting out the lock, which he had so well under way when she had interrupted him.

She watched him for a moment in silence; then her hand again fell lightly on his arm.

"You must not go out through that room, Phil Rushington," she said.

"Why not?" he asked, without ceasing the work.

"Because you will be set upon and overpowered by several men if you attempt it."

"Walt was out there, and I suppose he was set upon by the crowd. So I had better face them and help him out of his trouble. I shouldn't go away and leave him here, and you needn't think it."

"But no harm will come to him. It is you that they have a grudge against."

Phil had to bend close to his work to hide a smile. The girl was telling more than she intended, he was sure, and at the same time he had reason to think that she was more anxious to help him to escape than she cared to admit.

"If they have a grudge against me, the sooner I give them a show at me the earlier they will find out what sort of stuff I am made of."

At this moment Rush found that he could move the lock in the woodwork, and he was sure that a little prying would enable him to draw it out so that the bolt would no longer reach the socket. Then he once more



turned to Vera, who was watching him with breathless interest.

"It is quiet in the room beyond this door," he said, in the same cautious key which both had used in all that had passed between them. "Will you tell me how many ruffians I will have to tackle when I open the door?"

"I do not know. I know that there will be heavy odds against you, and you must not go into that room. You must not, I say!"

She grasped his arm as she spoke, and strove to draw him away from the door.

"Come, I will show you a way to escape!" she exclaimed. "I did not mean to tell you how I got into this room, but you are so brave—I mean so reckless—that I will have to, or be responsible for your death. You are an obstinate fellow, anyway!"

Rush hesitated. He was sure that he could get out of the room by way of the door which he had been at work on. To go out any other way would be at the risk of being betrayed by Vera.

He looked at her searchingly, and she read his doubts.

"You are more afraid of me than you are of the ruffians in the room yonder!" she exclaimed.

"You are mistaken. But I do not know whether you are my friend or not, and I don't want to pitch into you with my fists as I shall do in the case of the roughs. Even if you mean to betray me, I do not wish to be rude or harsh with you. Don't you see the difference?"

Her eyes fell, and there was a lovely pink flush in her cheeks as she said:

"Take my word for it, Phil Rushington; I will not betray you. Come—come!"

He took her word and followed her, although he was not unprepared for treachery.

## CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH RUSH MAKES A WONDERFUL LEAP.

Going to the opposite side of the room, Vera pressed with her foot what appeared to be one of the common nails in the floor. Instantly a square section of the floor swung downward, revealing an opening barely large enough to admit the body of an ordinary sized man. Below it was quite dark.

"Drop through; it isn't more than six feet to the ground," said Vera.

Rush hesitated, and instantly the girl shook her small clinched fist in his face, crying:

"There, you will not do as you promise! You said that you would take my word, and now you show that you don't dare to!"

Instantly Phil let himself down through the opening, saying:

"Here's the proof; I'll lead the way if you'll tell me where to go."

Vera followed him without hesitation. At the same time they heard the hurried tramp of heavy feet, and then the opening of the door in the room which they had just left.

Vera pushed the trap-door upward and it closed with a click. It left them in pitch darkness, but Rush felt the hand of the girl again on his arm, drawing him gently.

She did not speak, and he took the hint and was silent also. They moved hurriedly across what appeared to be the width of a cellar, and then his companion groped along a wall until she found a small loose stone. This she removed, and then her soft lips touched Phil's ear.

"We must crawl through a space tunneled through the ground if you trust me to do it; or you may stay here and wait until they go out of the room above."

"Let her go, Vera, for I trust you," said Rush.

It almost seemed to him that the lips



against his ear lingered in just the faintest suggestion of a kiss. Then she stooped, and seemed to be tugging at something which was too heavy for her strength.

"What is it? Let me help you," he said.

"It is heavy, and you may help. But you must let me take your hand and guide it to the right spot. There, now lift on that stone as hard as you can. Get it past its centre of gravity, and it will swing out of the way quite easily. There it goes."

The rock rolled aside, and a cool draught of air blew in their faces.

"Crawl in on your hands and knees, and keep on until you see daylight."

He crawled ahead with all speed for a considerable distance, and then paused, wondering if Vera had followed. He could hear nothing of her, and when he called her name softly there was no answer.

"She has left me in the lurch, whether I'm on my way to safety or not," muttered Rush. Then a startling thought came to him. What if there was no other opening to the underground tunnel which he had entered? Then, if she were treacherous, he might be entombed alive, and in a place where it would be impossible to make any one hear an appeal for help.

It was not an agreeable suggestion, but to entertain it was to imply continued distrust of Vera, and he could still feel, in imagination, the soft touch of the girl's caressing lips against his ear.

"She would not betray me like that!" was his conviction. Then he pushed on as fast as he could scramble over the ground.

The distance seemed interminable, and he must have kept on at a good rate of speed for fully twenty minutes before he beheld a glimmer of light ahead. There he paused to draw a full breath, for he had begun to fear that he had been betrayed into some mysterious underground labyrinth, where he

might wander forever without coming out into the light of day.

"She was true, after all, and yet she worked against the old sinner that she called her father. She has taken some risk just to keep me out of a fight with that crowd of ruffians. But if she has left me without giving me any information of Dora I don't see what it all amounts to. I will have to go back and run my nose into the same hornet's nest that she was so anxious that I should escape from."

He pushed onward again, and in a moment emerged into the open air.

He was not a little surprised to find himself in a natural opening in the forest, where there was a smooth slope down to the bank of a narrow stream.

This stream could not be the noble Hudson, of that Phil was sure, but it was probably an unimportant tributary of that river.

"This is all very well, but it isn't helping Dora any," was Phil's reflection.

The ear which had been touched by Vera's lips was burning, and it seemed to give a strangely sharp twinge every time he thought of Dora Warren.

"I wonder if there would be any hair-pulling if I had those two girls together! No, for Dora would act as indifferent to me as you please, and she would chatter with Vera to beat the band. It would be Vera that I would have to look out for. My! wasn't she spiteful when she thought I was going back on my word, and she shook her little fist under my nose!"

Phil suddenly became silent, for he saw a man skulking along the bank of the stream in a suspicious manner. It brought a startling suspicion into his mind.

"What if that girl really led me on to the track of Dora's captor, without saying anything about it! If it turns out that way, then Dora will have to be a friend to Vera whether



she likes it or not. Ah! what is that chap doing?"

The sun had just sunk behind the western slopes, and it was beginning to grow shadowy among the trees. But he could see the man quite distinctly, and as the distance was not great, he was able to make out that he answered to the accurate description furnished by the laborer who had seen Dora with her captor.

"It is he; and I'm right on to him!"

Rush started at a run down the slope. As he did so the man looked up, stared for a single second, and then leaped toward the water. Then for the first time Phil saw that there was a plank resting across the stream, which at that point was about twenty feet wide.

The man leaped upon the plank, darted across it, and then turned with the evident intention of lifting it from its place. Rush strained every nerve to reach it before it should be removed. But he saw at once that it was impossible to do so, for the plank was readily lifted and the man swung it over to his side of the stream long before Phil could reach the water.

The man then stood with an exultant grin on his face, for he felt certain that he had euchred the youth, who would not relish a plunge in the river, which in any case would place him at a disadvantage.

But Rush did not slacken his furious pace, and the man's grin became frozen into a glare of mute wonderment.

What did the lad mean to do? Did he not see that he was dashing straight toward a deep, swift current, which would in any case carry him some distance before he could swim across it?

On and on flew Rushington, his face alert and determined, his eyes fixed upon the twenty feet of rolling water and the solid turf on the opposite side. On and on, down

the gentle slope, to the very brink of the stream, and then, like a panther, his agile form shot out over the water!

A low ejaculation escaped the lips of the man, and at the same time Rush heard a feminine cry of excitement rather than alarm—and it came from his rear.

Then the man recoiled, a fierce word on his lips, and the same feminine voice cried out in admiration. For Phil had cleared the stream, his feet striking fairly on the other bank, with several inches to spare, and momentum sufficient to carry him at a good run up the slope!

It was a magnificent leap, all the more so that it had not been made on a prepared track and immediately after training, for it. Fully twenty-two feet had been cleared—not in sport, but to some purpose! And Phil, glancing back, saw Vera standing near the exit to the tunnel, where the shrubbery grew densely, gazing down at him with her lovely face aglow with an admiration too deep for words.

The moment was one of peril to him, as well as of triumph. He could not forbear a slight wave of his hand to the girl who had proved herself so faithful, and who had observed his remarkable leap with such evident admiration. And she responded with a wave of her handkerchief, as if she had been one of a crowd of spectators.

But even as he looked at her and observed her enthusiasm, he saw her point past him with a sudden change of aspect, while a cry of alarm rang from her lips. At the same instant there was the crack of a revolver, and Rush felt a stinging nip of a bullet on the same ear which Vera had touched with her lips.

He wheeled and was in time to see the man in the act of drawing bead for a second shot. Down dropped Rush, and just in time,



for the second bullet whistled over him as he fell.

There was a scream from Vera, who thought that the shot had caused Phil to fail. She came running down the slope, regardless of the fact that she could not cross the stream to get to him.

He was up again in a twinkling and dashing boldly after his assailant, who had once more taken to his heels. That the man was a ruffian of the most dangerous type was made plain by his readiness to use a pistol. His action also proved that he was reluctant to come at close quarters with Phil Rushington, whom he probably recognized.

A little way beyond the stream was a dense growth of forest trees, and among these a twilight gloom was fast descending. Into that twilight the man whom Phil was pursuing plunged at a headlong pace.

Rush had no weapon with which to call his foe to a halt, and there was nothing for him to do except to dash on in pursuit, unmindful of the danger into which he was running most recklessly.

The man disappeared as soon as he reached the shadows of the trees. Phil ran on blindly for a short distance but, realizing the futility of such a pursuit, he came to a halt, breathing fast with his exertions.

He searched the ground for tracks, but found none, except just at the spot where the man had first plunged into the woods. It was as if he had suddenly taken wings at that place and flown away!

## CHAPTER VIII.

"TWO HEADS CRACKED TOGETHER LIKE BILLIARD BALLS."

In that vain search for the tracks of the ruffian, Phil experienced a miserable sense of confusion, for it seemed as if he had made a splendid chase, almost winning it, but fail-

ing just when he should have gained the fruits of it.

He went back out of the woods a few paces, to get his bearings anew, thinking that he might have entered by a different pathway from that taken by the one he was following.

As he stood staring at the ground at his feet there was another sharp report, seemingly from a point close in front of him, and Rush fell, as if the bullet had pierced his brain!

It was not the first time in his life that Phil Rushington had been brought down by a treacherous shot. His very daring was certain to bring him face to face with death, for he never stopped to consider that he had but one life to risk, the same as the more prudent ones who would never take any hazard that could be shirked or avoided.

It must have been that his unconsciousness lasted a long while; for when he awoke it was night, and the place where he was lying was dimly illumined by a poorly trimmed lamp.

At first he thought that he was alone, but he soon became conscious of some one near him. What was his surprise, as he attempted to rise to a sitting posture, to have a small hand gently but firmly press him back, while the face of Vera looked into his, with a finger on her lips, commanding silence!

It was a hard command for him to obey just then; but he decided to submit until he knew what kind of a fix he was in, and how badly off he was, for he remembered that he had fallen from a shot which had seemed to pierce his brain.

The place where he was lying seemed to be a room in a rude hut of some sort, the roof of it being covered with bark and straw. The floor was of earth, pounded or trodden hard.

Vera rose and crossed the space and



seemed to listen at a partition. Then she returned and said in a whisper:

"I'll manage to get you out of here alive, Phil Rushington, if you will promise to do just what I tell you."

Rush found that all his wits were coming back, as sharp and active as ever. He was in no mood to make blind promises.

"Tell me in the first place how much I'm hurt? I don't feel much the worse for it, beyond a little giddiness in the head."

"No doubt you are always a little giddy in the head, so don't lay that to the effect of the bullet, Phil Rushington."

"That is right, Vera. But the kind I usually suffer from bothers others more than it does me, while this troubles me the most. I think I'm all right, anyway, or you would be crying over me instead of making jokes at my expense."

"You weren't hurt much, except to be stunned. But it was a close call, and it was meant to kill. The one who fired the shot has another that will be sure to finish you if you are caught at close quarters again. I want to tell you what to do, and you must promise to do it."

"Tell away."

"I will help you out of here, and tell you how to get back to civilization without running your head into another trap. You will then go, bidding me a kind good-by, and put the officers on the tracks of the abductors of Miss Dora Warren. What business have you trying to do the work of the police and constables? Come, will you promise?"

"I put the matter in the hands of the police of the city before I started out at all, and you see which of us got on to the track first. No, Miss Vera, I can't promise you what you ask. Besides, I must know what has become of my friend, Walt Arkwright. I'm not dead yet, and while I have a clear

head and good muscles, I am going to make as good a bluff as I can."

"How obstinate you are!" exclaimed the girl again.

"Put it that way if you like, but it is the way I'm made, and I'll have to do accordingly. Get me a pistol, can't you?"

"There is one in your pocket already, Phil Rushington."

"How came it there?"

"My right hand doesn't know, although my left one did it."

"You are a good girl, Vera, and don't think that I don't appreciate what you have done for me."

"It would be worth more to you if Dora had done it for you, I know."

"I have not said so."

"It is true just the same. What I do for you I do for Dora. But never mind. We'll forget each other in a little while. You will go up and up in the world, and I will go down, down!"

There was a sort of pathos in the girl's words that touched Rush to the point of seriousness. He sat up and took both of her hands in his, looking into her eyes, which quickly fell under his gaze.

"You will not go down, down—you must not. Why do you stay among such lawless people, when you are so beautiful and with such a kind and true heart?"

"They are my people," was the low answer.

"Not the ones who abducted Dora?"

"Yes."

"What are they to you?"

"You would never speak kindly to me again if I should tell you, Phil Rushington."

"Whatever they may be to you can make me no less your friend, Vera. Tell me, and then say that you will go among my friends and let them help you up and up, instead of



letting these people drag you down until you are as low as they are."

"I cannot promise you that. Your Dora would not care for me, and I don't believe I should like her. She is proud and fine. She would despise me, and be jealous, too, if you were to seem to think me pretty."

"Dora would be a good friend to you. But you have not told me yet what these people are to you?"

"The one who shot at you is my brother. I have two other brothers and an uncle in the gang. They are all crooks, sometimes in the cities for awhile, but oftener skulking about in some wild place like this. They have many hiding-places in the wood, even as far as in the Adirondack wilderness. I have thought of leaving them sometime, but they are my people, and I must not. But you shall not suffer at their hands if you will only do as I ask of you."

"You would not expect me to leave Dora here and seek my own safety?"

"The officers would save her if anybody can. And I promise to see that she is set at liberty, though there may be a delay of a few days."

"I have given a pledge to have her restored to her family within two days from the time I began the search, and I shall keep the pledge. Where is she now? Is she in this place?"

"You will throw away your life if you try to do anything about it here and now!"

"Tell me if she is in this place."

"Yes, yes—very near here, if you must know."

"This is above ground?"

"It is an artificial excavation covered in with bark, turf and straw."

Rush sprang to his feet. He found that he was still a little dizzy, and that there was a sore place on his head where the bullet had

grazed, but otherwise he had never felt better in his life.

"Where shall I find Dora Warren?" he said, while the girl stood before him, half frowning, half smiling.

"She is just beyond that partition. But she is guarded."

"That is all right. By how many?"

"One—the wife of my brother."

"That is easy. Any door for getting through?"

"You go through that door, and are met by one of my brothers and my uncle. If they don't succeed in killing you, then you will find another door leading into the room where their prisoner is, with the woman guarding her. She has a revolver, and she has shot her man, but if you should get the best of her, you could pass on with Dora through another door, when you would be met by my other brother. He is a terrible fighter, and you could not get by him. Do you think you will try to go through that programme?"

"Sure, I've got to, in order to keep my pledge. I can't afford to bust that, Vera. So here goes, and may heaven have mercy on your brothers!"

Rush bent and touched his lips half playfully to Vera's cheek, and then stepped lightly to the door which she had first pointed out to him.

She followed and clung to his arm.

"Please don't throw away your life!" she pleaded.

"Don't worry but I'll get a good price for it, if it has to go. Now, if you are a friend to me, give me a free hand here, and see me trump all the tricks!"

"You are reckless—but I like a fellow best who will toss up his life like a penny! What a jump that was that you made—my brother says it was wonderful! I know now why the people and the newspapers have so much



to say about you, Phil Rushington. You are the bravest fellow, and the best athlete in the country!"

Rush could not be indifferent to such praise as this, though it came from the child of an outlaw family. Vera was beautiful and brilliant in wit—almost, if not quite, the equal of Dora Warren. Such praise from her meant something.

"You rate me too high," he said. "But I am proud to know that you think so well of me. I know that we shall always be friends, and that you will come to live with respectable people very soon. You are like the beautiful Lorna Doone. Had you read of her, and how John Ridd, who was a great fighter, overcame the outlaw Doones and brought Lorna to live among good people?"

"Yes, I have read of her, and thought of myself as Lorna, and wondered if there was a John Ridd in the world for me! Now I know—but never mind! Go, if you must. If it comes to shooting, see that you begin it!"

Then Vera suddenly flung her arms around Phil's neck, held him so for an instant, and pushed him away, her cheeks pink and white and her eyes dancing.

He opened the door and stepped lightly through. The room beyond was long and low, and at the farther end of it two men sat smoking. As Rush looked in upon them one leaned over toward the other saying:

"My pipe has gone out; give me a light from yours."

They leaned toward each other. Rush saw a chance for an effective prank, and he glided toward them with swift, silent strides. Then he darted forward, caught one by the shoulders and flung him head foremost against the other!

Two pipes were broken—two heads cracked together like billiard balls—two

rough throats let out yells of mingled consternation and pain!

## CHAPTER IX.

### A RUSE AND A RACE.

It would be difficult to feebly indicate the kind and quantity of expressions which came tumbling out of the mouths of the two ruffians—uncle and nephew.

Neither of them was in the best humor, both had been drinking more of hard cider than was good for them, and when their heads cracked together the one upon whom the other was thrown thought that the collision was due to a stupid, drunken lurch for which the other was responsible.

Consequently the uncle, who happened to be the one who was passive in the collision, scrambled up and hit the nephew a good one straight from the shoulder, landing it between the eyes, and sending the younger man sprawling on his back.

Rush was quick to comprehend the situation, and his love of fun as well as his anxiety to get the better of his foes at small cost to himself told him how to make the most of it.

The room was lighted rather dimly by a kerosene lamp, which was within easy reach of Phil. He extinguished it just as the nephew felt the weight of the uncle's fist.

Neither of them had seen Phil, in the confusion of the moment, for their heads had smashed together like the pilots of two colliding locomotives. The younger man was roaring mad under the sting of the older one's fist, and he sailed into his uncle with all of the cordiality which is usually displayed when relatives get into a row with one another.

Spat!—slap!—whack!—came out of the darkness, while the two ruffians rolled over and over, punching and clawing after a fashion which could never have been divided



into rounds by the coolest referee in Christendom.

Rush stood and shook with silent laughter, his only regret being that he could not behold all the details of the "scrap." He heard them rolling and tumbling his way, and as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he made out the position of the struggling forms.

Taking care to keep out of the reach of their arms, Rush fell to kicking them both with perfect impartiality, knowing that the combatants would count each kick as an addition to the score to be settled between them. Rush had not played football for nothing, when it came to kicking, and he applied the strength of his legs where he believed it would do the most good.

The men grew more furious each instant, and fought with redoubled fury. They were well matched, and they had had rows together before. The memory of old scores helped to keep the battle warm, and it was evident that the fight would not end until both of the contestants were thoroughly pummeled, and all the strength and nerve knocked out of them.

The noise made by the combatants penetrated to every part of the retreat. Vera from the inner room heard it, and supposed that it was between Rush and her relatives.

In her anxiety she opened the door and slipped through. A shaft of light fell fairly upon Phil as she did so, and she saw the two struggling forms on the ground, and Rush in the act of kicking both of them with a vigor that showed that he was all right.

Phil saw her and hastened to her side.

"They don't even know that I'm in it," he said, in a low tone. "I pushed one of them over against the other, and that got them to fighting. They haven't even seen me, and the kicks I was applying just as a counter irritant, the same as the doctors put on

plasters. They'll do each other up all right, and that disposes of two of your esteemed relatives, so far as I am concerned. Now show me some more of them."

"What a boy you are, Phil Rushington!" whispered Vera.

At that moment the other door opened and the young woman who was the wife of the nephew in the fight came into the room. Seeing that the place was in darkness, and that somebody was fighting on the ground, she went back to get a light.

Phil slipped up to the door which she left ajar, and the instant that she reappeared with the lamp he blew it out. Vera was at his side, ready to help if needed. She dodged into the other room, and as the young woman turned upon Phil with an angry exclamation he slipped through the doorway, closed it, found a bolt, slipped that into its socket, and then struck a match.

"There is another lamp that you can light—this way," exclaimed Vera.

The lamp was lighted. At the same time they heard the young woman in the other room pounding on the door and screaming at the top of her voice.

"Let her sing and we'll play," laughed Rush. "Now where's Dora? You see, I'm getting there all right, and none of my bones bent or broken so far."

Vera led the way across the room to an alcove. And there, lying on a pallet of straw was the object of his quest—Dora Warren.

She seemed to be sleeping sweetly, with one arm thrown over her head, and her pretty lips parted, showing a glimpse of her pearly teeth.

She made a pretty picture, and Vera looked from her face to that of Phil Rushington.

"She is handsome and innocent looking, and I don't wonder that you like her," she said.



"You are as innocent looking as she now, and if you will leave these people and make the most of yourself you will always remain so," said Rush.

"It is worth trying, and but for my father I would leave them. But there is no time now for us to discuss it, for you will have to make the most of the chance to get away from here. My other brother is the worst fighter of all, and you will have no easy time of it if you have to face him."

"If you only had still another brother here, I would get the two of them mixed up like the uncle and nephew in yonder, and then I would have a cinch. But I'll manage him, don't worry."

"You can do anything, Phil Rushington."

Phil bent over Dora and shook her gently. She stirred, but it was evident that she was stupefied with some drug which made her sleep heavily.

"I'll have to carry her out in my arms. If you will open the door for me, Vera, and carry the lamp, I will soon be out of this place. And for your own safety, you had better follow."

"I will go back to the hut where I live with my father, and keep along with you so far. There are teams here that we can use."

"Good! Then it will be pretty plain sailing after we are out of this place. Now lead the way, please."

Vera took the lamp and went to the door through which they would have to pass and waited there while Phil lifted Dora gently, and held her in a position that would enable him to carry her the most easily.

They passed out together, and found themselves in a narrow passage, with another door at the end.

There Vera's fighting brother lay on a blanket snoring.

He lay in such a position, however, that no

one could open the door without waking him.

"He'll have to be stirred up anyhow," whispered Phil.

"Be careful, for he is like a score of tigers!"

"He'll be like a score of sick tigers when I get through with him if he tries to make me trouble. I'll lay Dora down here for a moment, and you may watch her while I take care of the babe yonder."

The sleeping outlaw was a veritable giant, with bare arms of enormous size, and a brown, hairy face and neck upturned to the light.

Rush gazed at him for a moment just to size him up. Then he coolly let the ruffian have the toe of his right shoe fairly in the ribs, with a force almost great enough to break them!

"Wow!" howled the giant, rolling over and over, and then springing to his feet and glaring about him.

"Right here, my hearty!" said Rush.

The gaze of the man alighted on him, and then a dash was made with fists hammering in the air, aimed at the head of Phil.

Rush was cool, while his assailant was frantic with pain and rage. This was Phil's object in giving the man the kick. It is the cool fighter who wins, other things being equal, and the ruffian was beside himself, while he saw only a rather slender youth for an antagonist. He meant to smash him at a blow.

He might have succeeded had he landed the blow; but that was the difficult part of it. He started a dozen for the face of the youth, but not one reached its destination.

Rush was cool and smiling, and he danced about, first on one foot, then on the other, parrying and dodging, but making no attempt to strike in return until his foe was almost wild with rage. Then Phil suddenly ran backward, gathered his forces, and pre-



pared to send out his fist with all of the marvelous power of his strangely developed arm behind it.

The ruffian dashed pantingly upon him; then crack!—the small white hand, clenched to the hardness of a hickory knot, struck the man fairly between the eyes.

The ruffian was almost lifted from his feet, and he went backward as if he were fired out of a gun. Then he fell full length on the ground and lay as motionless as though he had been dropped by a bullet.

"The fight is over, Vera, and unless you are anxious to find if your brother has a broken skull, we will get out of here as quick as we can."

"I am ready to go, Phil Rushington."

Rush again lifted his burden, feeling proud that he had so far succeeded in redeeming the pledge made to Mrs. Warren.

Vera opened the last door for him, and in another moment they were out under the stars, with the cool night wind fanning their cheeks.

Vera led the way to a small building that stood near where there were horses and vehicles of several varieties. Rush was quick to choose the best horse and a good carriage. He got them ready, placed Dora in the vehicle and Vera got in to hold the reins. Then he said:

"Those ruffians will soon get out of there and they will make a break first to overtake me. Failing in that they will try to escape from the squad of officers whom they know will soon be on their trail. So I must see that their horses are where they cannot be of use to them."

Rush brought three horses out of the stable, wondering while he did so if they were not stolen by the ruffians in the first place. In any case, he had no scruples. He turned the animals loose in the road and proceeded to lash them into a run. He had little doubt

but they would keep on until many miles were placed between them and their owners.

Just as this was done they heard a shout from the outlaws' retreat, showing that they had discovered the flight of their prisoners.

"Now we wait to be getting a hustle on us, for we don't want any bullets flying where there are girls to be hit by them. I suppose they would shoot you, Vera, as quick as they would me if they knew you had been treacherous."

"They would do it sooner."

Down came the whip on the horse Phil had chosen. The animal leaped into a run at the start, but at the same time they saw a glimmer of light in the doorway of the retreat which they had just left, and hoarse shouts broke upon the air.

"Now, if they had horses, we should be in for it!" Phil exclaimed.

"Oh, there is something that I forgot to tell you! Will you forgive me?" cried Vera, in sudden distress. "They have more horses close by! I never thought of them!"

"Then we're in for a rattling old race!" said Rush.

And he applied his whip mercilessly.

## CHAPTER X.

"GOOD-BY, VERA!" BACK WITH THE NORM. POET.

It was a rattling old race, as Phil Rushington had predicted, for the uncle and one of the nephews had discovered that they had been sadly duped and that their prisoners had fled. The horses in the stable which Rush had set loose were by no means the best belonging to the outlaw family.

In a twinkling, almost, they had two excellent horses from another part of their retreat saddled and mounted and speeding along the lonely road at a furious pace.

It was not long before Phil and Vera heard



the thunder of pursuing hoofs. Then Vera showed more of apprehension than she had at any other time since the very first.

"What will you do now?" she exclaimed.

"Keep this nag's legs wagging for all they are worth."

"But they can overtake us in the saddle."

"Then I'll have to fight."

"Will nothing daunt you, Phil Rushington?"

"Nothing but death, Vera—and a pretty girl when she is angry with me. That is why I always try to keep on the good side of them. This one that I have taken so much trouble to save from her captors I would be afraid of under some circumstances."

"And would you be afraid of me?"

"I'm too sharp to say yes, and so give you a grip on me. No, Vera, you won't catch me napping in a hurry, and I never told Dora Warren that I was afraid of her yet. Ah! here they come, with a full head of steam on. I wonder if this horse can do any better."

Down came the whip, and the horse did do better, for a brief spurt, at all events. A moment later Rush caught the glimmer of water through the trees.

"What water is that?" he asked, for the entire locality was strange to him.

"It is the Hudson River."

"There is no bridge here, so we don't cross it?"

"No. But the road runs quite close to the bank for a short distance. There is a landing with rowboats near."

"A landing with boats?" repeated Rush.

"Tell me as near as you can where I will strike it."

"Right yonder is a path leading to it."

"Quick, then, for a ruse. Let this team go to glory; I prefer water to land any day for a race, unless I'm on a bike."

Rush pulled the horse out by the roadside,

leaped out, seized Dora in his arms, saw that Vera had alighted, and then said:

"We'll take to the boats, and I'll send the team cracking down the road for the ruffians to follow, thinking they are still after me. Come Vera—you are in this race to stay."

Quick as a flash the girl sprang back into the buggy and caught up the reins.

"No, no!" she cried. "I will keep on, and lead them on a vain chase. When they catch me they will rave and talk, but that is all. They dare not turn on me, for I know too much about them. Good-by, Phil Rushington."

There was no time to debate the matter. There was no time, even, for Phil to risk snatching a kiss from the quivering lips of the girl as she leaned down toward him; yet he did so, with Dora in his arms, and when he looked down into her face a moment afterward he met the gaze of her wide open wondering eyes.

He could not help wondering if she saw him kiss Vera, and if she did, what she thought of it. He was running with her down to the river side when he made the discovery that she had roused from the sleepy stupor in which she had so long remained.

"Awake at last, Dora—and pretty near safe!" said Rush.

"Am I? I thought I must be dreaming, and what I saw was only seeming—that those eyes with something dancing into yours as they were glancing, were in truth but just a fancy, caught by thinking too romancy!"

Thus, in rhyme and measure, came the first words from the lips of Dora Warren, "the Norm poet."

Rush was close to being embarrassed for just a moment. But it was not like him to be caught and to stay.

"I tell you, though, Dora, that girl that I just kissed is a daisy and a peach, and don't you forget it!"



"Indeed! Well, you like daisies and peaches, old man, and you must have them. So don't feel badly because you were caught in the act, Rushy dear. I knew you could never pass a pretty pair of lips without kissing them, or wanting to, which is just as bad. But where am I, and what is the bluff they have been putting up on us? I feel as if I had been writing poetry steady for a week and it had left my wits sadly out of tune. Ah! going to take me on a boat ride? Well, you can answer my questions while you pull for the shore."

Out upon the broad bosom of the river Rush answered Dora's questions. Indeed, he told her the story of her disappearance as far as he knew it, and a brief account of his pursuit and its result.

She made no comments until he had finished. Then she said:

"You have had good nerve, Rushy dear, and if my friendship e'er should swerve, Rushy dear, you may pitch me on a curve, Rushy, dear!"

Rush stopped rowing long enough to find whether she would take a kiss from him. He found that she would. But she would accept and return only one.

"They won't last if you use them too flushly, and you and I don't want to get too slushy—see? Oh, you don't know how the rhymes keep jingling through my brain, so that I cannot hold them back. I could spin off a whole volume of verse in an hour, and then they would continue to come—like sneezes, when one faces wintry breezes! Can't I shut off those silly jingles, I wonder? Poor mamma! How she must be worrying about me."

"And how she will hug you when I show you all safe and sound."

"She will hug you, too, Rush; you know she will."

"Yes, and she will tell you that you may do the same."

"Telling was never making, not with this chicken."

"But you have not yet told me how it happened that you were taken away, in that fashion. How did they work the trick?"

"I can tell you only the beginning of the story, and you will have to theorize for the rest. Yesterday—no, I don't pretend to know what day it was—I started to see Ida Fairfield, going on my wheel. While I was riding through a strip of woods—you know where it is—a man on horseback overtook me and inquired if there was a blacksmith shop near where he could have a shoe set on his horse. I told him I didn't know of any. Then his horse stumbled right in front of me, and I got off my wheel for fear of being thrown. In a twinkling the man leaned over and flung a sort of dust, almost like smoke, into my face! It blinded and almost suffocated me, so that I staggered and fell. He flung my wheel into the bushes, caught me up and remounted, dashing down a bridle path toward the river. I remember nothing more with distinctness. It seems as if I roused once enough to eat a little something, but I can't think where I was, or who was with me. I was kept drugged."

"And that is all?"

"That is all."

"You have no idea why you were abducted?"

"I only know that the man who took me onto his horse rode past our house with Arthur Wardner one afternoon!"

"Arthur Wardner, the millionaire crook—if he keeps on in this fashion. But I'm afraid it will be hard to nail these things to him, for I believe he is not in this vicinity now. Still, he can send his orders a good ways, and money with them. You will not be safe until that crew of Lynde outlaws is cleaned out."



They probably meant to make some money out of the business in more ways than one, and they had no idea of being followed up so sharp. The city police would never have tracked them, and the country constables are too slow always."

"It takes bonny Phil Rushington to win the races, and the Norm. poet places her money on him, every time. Now don't let your head enlarge. I wonder when we shall get home?"

It was two hours before they reached a landing that Rush recognized. It was another hour before they arrived at the Warren residence, which was lighted from top to bottom, as though for a reception. It was near daybreak, and Rush rang the bell, with Dora standing close and pinching his arm.

The door was opened—by Dora's father. He caught her in his arms, while Phil ran in, shouting:

"Mrs. Warren, I've kept my pledge, and the time isn't up!"

Mrs. Warren ran along the hall like a girl, and Dora was hugged, kissed and cried over. In the midst of it Walt Arkwright limped down the stairs, swung an arm over Phil's shoulder, and cried:

"Well, old man, you are in it again! I had a pretty good fight, though, and I didn't skip until they began pumping lead at me. Then, as the odds were rather heavy, I made a break for the town, got a boat, posted the police, then came here. My folks don't know that I got nipped in the leg by a bullet, and they needn't know, as ma would think I couldn't go back to Springvale Academy next week, and now that you are pretty sure to go I wouldn't miss it for a farm."

"You put up a good fight, Walt, and a little blood-letting may not hurt you. I'm sorry for you, just the same. You don't know how I worried about you."

"It was a lively bit of adventure for this prosy locality, anyhow. Now I wonder if the Lynde crowd will get pulled in."

"Probably not. And that girl, Walt, though she doesn't come up to Dora, ought to be taken away from such surroundings and given a show in the world."

"Vera Lynde—makes me think of Lorna Doone," said Walt.

"Just start out and be like John Ridd, Walt, and she is yours."

"It isn't in me. You are the fighter, and everything else that women like."

"That he is!" cried Mrs. Warren, and Rush got the motherly hug which Dora had promised that lady should give him.

The next day the uncle and one of the nephews of the Lynde crowd were brought in by constables. The other nephew had fled on a horse, and no trace could be found of Vera and her crippled father, who might not have been arrested in any case.

The Lyndes who were arrested failed to implicate Arthur Wardner, but they had to do time at Sing Sing on their own account.

Of the account of Phil Rushington's nifty chase of Dora's abductors, and his successful rescue, the newspapers were full, and when he returned to Springvale the next week, with his chum, Walt Arkwright, he was the lion of the school, and there was a real ovation in his honor.

Amid all of the hard work and wild escapades which were to follow, Phil Rushington often thought of the tremulous lips of Vera Lynde as they pressed his in farewell, and wondered if he were ever to see her again.

THE END.

The next number of the DO AND DARE WEEKLY will contain "Phil Rushington's Pranks; or, The Last Session at Springvale," by Stanley Norris.



# THE DO AND DARE WEEKLY

THE DO AND DARE WEEKLY tells of the exploits and adventures of one PHIL RUSHINGTON, a lively, hustling, bright and brave American boy—a first-class all-round athlete, and a thorough gentleman in all the phases of his eventful career. The author of these stories is MR. STANLEY NORRIS, an able writer, and one thoroughly in sympathy with the wants of our boys and girls in the line of reading. His work is bound to please.

*The following are the titles so far ready for announcement:*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1—Phil Rushington's et, The Sophs of Springvale Academy.            | 4—Phil Rushington's Pledge; or, The Disappearance of Dora.       |
| 2—Phil Rushington's Sealed Orders; or, A Mad Chase on French River. | 5—Phil Rushington's Pranks; or, The Last Sessions at Springvale. |
| 3—Phil Rushington's Hustles et, a Fortune Made in a Day.            | 6—Phil Rushington's Danger; or, A Bright Light for Friends.      |

Price 5 Cents Each—For Sale by all Newsdealers

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.

## The Tip Top Weekly AND The Frank Merriwell STORIES

NO modern series of tales for boys and youth has met with anything like the cordial reception and popularity accorded to the Frank Merriwell Stories, published exclusively in Street and Smith's TIP TOP WEEKLY, a publication which has to-day a circulation larger than that of all similar publications combined.

There must be a reason for this, and there is. Frank Merriwell, as portrayed by the author, is a jolly, wholesouled, honest, courageous American lad, who appeals to the hearts of the boys.

He has no bad habits, and his manliness inculcates the idea that it is not necessary for a boy to indulge in petty vices to be a hero. Frank Merriwell's example is a shining light for every ambitious lad to follow. The following are the latest issues:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 203—Frank Merriwell's Musketeers; or, The Mountain Vendetta.   | 193—Frank Merriwell's Holidays; or, A Merry Christmas with Old Friends. |
| 202—Frank Merriwell's Sleigh; or, Warm Hearts and Brave Hands. | 192—Frank Merriwell's Touch; or, Light as a Feather, Yet Heavy as Iron. |
| 201—Frank Merriwell's Ice Yacht; or, Wing and Wing.            | 191—Frank Merriwell's Generosity; or, Square as a Brick.                |
| 200—Frank Merriwell's Skates; or, Into the Ice Trap.           | 190—Frank Merriwell's Drive; or, Defeating the Professionals.           |
| 199—Frank Merriwell's Work; or, In Training for Spring Sports. | 189—Frank Merriwell's Heart; or, A Royal Thanksgiving.                  |
| 198—Frank Merriwell's Temptation; or, Nothing but Quiet Sport. | 188—Frank Merriwell's Sport; or, The Hazing of Jack Ready.              |
| 197—Frank Merriwell's "Flock"; or, The Awakening of Badger.    | 187—Frank Merriwell's "Set"; or, Picking Up an Outcast.                 |
| 196—Frank Merriwell Tested; or, A Doubtful Honor.              | 186—Frank Merriwell's Trust; or, Taming a Dangerous Foe.                |
| 195—Frank Merriwell's Limit; or, Calling a Halt.               |   |
| 194—Frank Merriwell's Stratagem; or, True Friends and False.   |   |

ISSUED WEEKLY **5 Cents a Copy** SOLD BY ALL NEWSDEALERS

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.



The Northeastern Dime Novel Exchange  
Lock Box 8  
Farnumsville. Mass.

DEC 22 1925



# More Libraries

STREET & SMITH

*always up to date*

**M**ANY readers of our ever-popular libraries are so enthusiastic as to wish us to publish the Tip Top twice a week—or even every day in the week, so as to give them more of their favorite reading.

It will be readily understood that this would be inadvisable for many reasons. Mr. Burt Standish writes the Merriwell stories carefully and well, as you all know. He does not feel that he can afford to jeopardize the quality in the slightest degree by increasing the quantity.

We will not permit any other publishers to supply the wants of our readers, as we are the originators of this class of refined, entertaining and instructive literature, which has attained world-wide popularity.

It affords us pleasure to say to our friends that we shall soon issue *other new* libraries, which will be far superior to anything of similar character issued by other publishers, and certain to be favorites with the readers of the Tip Top Weekly. The first of these new libraries will be known as the

## DO AND DARE WEEKLY

It will contain 32 pages, with illustrated cover, conforming in size and appearance to the Tip Top.

No. 1 will be on sale February 13, 1900, and will be found  
at all newsdealers. The price will be 5 cents per copy.

The Do and Dare Weekly will tell of the exploits and adventures of one PHIL RUSHINGTON, a lively, hustling, bright and brave American boy—a first-class all-round athlete, and a thorough gentleman in all the phases of his eventful career. The author of these stories is **Mr. Stanley Norris**, an able writer, and one thoroughly in sympathy with the wants of our boys and girls in the line of reading. His work is bound to please. The first number is entitled—

### Phil Rushington, or, The Sophs of Springvale Academy

a rattling, strong story. Read about the eighteen pretty rebels from the neighboring Normal School for girls, who set up a camp on an island and defy the faculty. Read how Phil runs the gauntlet, and turns the tables on his would-be hazers. Read of Phil's "terrible right." In fact, read the first number and you will like it. There is no doubt about it. Our other proposed new libraries will be announced and issued as soon as "Do and Dare" is well introduced.

Yours faithfully,

STREET & SMITH.